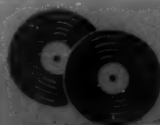


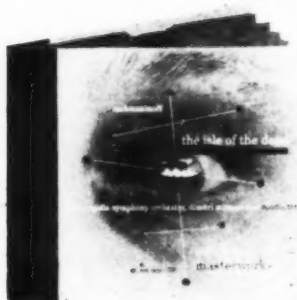
The American RECORD GUIDE

FORMERLY THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



APRIL, 1946 VOL. XII, NO. 8
edited by PETER HUGH REED
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Editorial Notes

For some time past, various readers have been writing to us upbraiding the companies for not including the words of songs and operatic arias with their recordings. Looking back over our copies of *The Gramophone* this past month, we came across an editorial comment made by the editor, Compton Mackenzie, back in August 1931. Since he has stated some pertinent facts relative to this, we shall quote him in part. Regarding the publication of words with songs, he said:

"Here the recording companies must be acquitted of blame. They have repeatedly done their best to overcome the difficulties of copyright in this matter, and we ourselves in *The Gramophone* have done our best to make the words of operatic arias available; but the law of copyright has been against us. We have never been able to make our work anything but eclectic, and, indeed, we have had to go to great expense and loss over our translations owing to the obstructive attitude of publishers. . . . Difficulties were put into my way by the holders of copyrights who could not see that the sale of a gramophone record always meant the potential sale of the song itself. Of course, there are a lot of songs the words of which *can* be printed, but giving away the printed words with the record always adds immensely to the difficulty of distribution."

The difficulties that beset the editor of *The Gramophone* and others in 1931 have become augmented in the past fifteen years. All copyright holders are reluctant to permit any infringement of their rights, no matter how much potential good it may do them. In the past we endeavored to arrange for a series of articles on art songs with translations of the words, but the publishers who had rights to these matters made it so dif-

ficult for us to realize what we wanted that we gave up this effort in despair. In this and other matters we too have incurred expenses for which we were never compensated, nor were our readers, for whom we had so hopefully worked. In some articles we wished upon occasion to quote themes from certain more modern works but found permission difficult to obtain.

The record companies are up against all sorts of things like this, which the record buyer knows nothing about. If a record company wishes to reproduce a work that hitherto has not been on records, it may find it has to pay a fee to the publisher for the privilege. But that fee does not protect the record company from any duplication of the work in question by a rival company. Once the work is recorded by one concern, another has the privilege or right to record it without incurring an initial fee. We ran up against this business in connection with our record society, The Friends of Recorded Music.

Mention of our society brings to mind that many readers have professed an interest in it, and hope that we will continue it now the war is over. The Friends of Recorded Music had to disband during the war because it was unable to get record material. To date, we have not been able to get a company to repress anything—that is, a concern whose material was sufficiently satisfactory to make us a decent record. We tried recently to have some of the Scriabin recordings of the late Katherine Ruth Heyman re-pressed. Because of her authentic style, which stemmed from a long association with the composer, these records are in great demand. We were told we could not get delivery for from six to ten months, and no guarantee on the quality of the pressing was offered. Arrangements have recently been made to continue the society when it is feasible, and several performances by new artists of hitherto unrecorded works have been planned. The well known and widely admired American pianist, Edwin Hughes, will make some recordings for us as soon as we can make the desired arrangements, and one of these will be a complete recording of an Edward MacDowell piano sonata.

Further correspondence and discussion on the Rubinstein-Toscanini recording of the Beethoven *Third Piano Concerto* deserve to

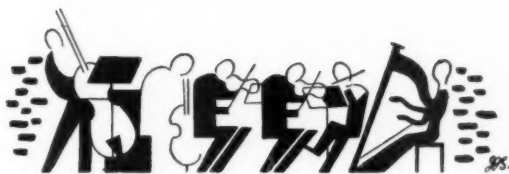
be passed on. It is the opinion of Mr. Mercer and of several other technical experts that the record buying public is divided fifty-fifty on this set. Those who can reproduce this set satisfactorily like it and are grateful that Victor put it out; those who cannot are bitter in their condemnation of the recording and of its release.

One reader, Mr. Stanley Moulton of Elizabeth, N. J., who bought the set on the strength of our review, took us to task. Whereupon we made certain suggestions to him. Knowing his equipment, we recommended a crystal cartridge replacement, and tests with several needles. The following extract from his letter will be of interest, we feel certain, to others:

"I have tried playing the controversial *Third Concerto* set after changing the crystal cartridge in my table-model Ansley set. Using my favorite chromium needle as well as the three kinds you suggested, I obtained varying results. In general, changing the crystal seems to have resulted in a cleaner and brighter reproduction of most records. In the concerto in question the playing was distinctly better, with a fairly bright line of strings in the midst of considerable surface noise in some spots. This with the chromium. The Acton Green Shank needle (type RF-12A) was fairly satisfactory, but generally strings sounded a little washed out and dull, and in the *Third Concerto* set the surface noise seemed unusually prominent. Noise was most evident in all tests on sides 2 and 6. The Acton Red Shank (type M-30) was intermediate between the Green Shank and the chromium, being quite close to the latter. The Victor Red Seal needle, in general, gave rather thin, hard, metallic reproduction on my outfit, which was not pleasing to my ears. It brought out, however, less surface noise from the concerto. This needle I believe will be useful in my case for dull sounding piano records.

"To return to the concerto, I now find it possible to enjoy it fairly well, thanks to the change made at your suggestion. My chief criticism of the review of this set is that it did not mention the salient point, admitted in the album notes, that the recording was somewhat below the usual standard, but was brought out because of the uncommonly good performance."

(Continued on page 217)



TONE-POEMS

NEVILLE D'ESTERRE

I have been thinking about Tone-Poems. You will notice the capital letters. These capital letters have a capital significance; and that is worth explaining.

Most of the greater music is tone poetry; in fact, all great music is tone poetry, unless it is absolute music. Those who have time to give careful consideration to the matter will recognize that there is not much absolute music in existence (i.e. composed and published) which is entitled to be called great. All the same, there does exist some absolute music which is superlatively great, but yet has little or no affinity with poetic expression, as that term is generally understood. It might be described as intellectual music, or even, in a special sense, as philosophical music. It is the product of the head rather than the heart. And its greatness arises from the fact that it is the work of men who could and did express what we call the heart with a strength and certainty manifest to all who have ears to hear. Two names, those of J. S. Bach and Beethoven, come to my mind at once; and I can offer no better illustration of my meaning than by reminding you that the creator of the final, fugal movement of the Hammerklavier Sonata (Beethoven's Op. 106, in B flat) was also the creator of the preceding *adagio sostenuto*, than which there exists, in the whole realm of music, no more revealing expression of the soul of a great poet. For, if that *adagio* movement is not

tone poetry, the term can have no meaning at all. Let the reader sit down at the keyboard and play those two movements; or go through them on a player-piano; or run through one of the gramophone recordings of them; and I think he will hardly fail to see what I mean. Or, with equal illumination, he can turn to the Cavatina of the B flat Quartet (Op. 130), and then to the Great Fugue, which was originally composed as its final movement.

Very well. There—in that third movement of the Hammerklavier or in the Cavatina—is a tone poem, and a very great tone poem, too. And he who wrote it was the creator of the C minor Symphony, the C major Quartet, the *Kreutzer* Sonata, the *Coriolan* Overture, and, in fact, of so many examples of perfect and unchallengeable tone poetry, that the task of enumerating and describing them would cost anybody half a day's labor. But the occasions did arise when Beethoven was moved by his own masterful nature to give voice to absolute musical expression, completely dissociated from all thought and feeling in other fields. When he did so, he produced absolute music which may quite properly be described as stupendous, and is, indeed, some of the most difficult music in existence for any untrained amateur to gather within his own intellectual grasp.

This kind of music is the exception, not

the rule. The music of our European civilization is, generally speaking, tone poetry. Tone poetry is a true descriptive figure of speech for the whole musical output of some of the greatest composers. (Gluck, Weber, Schubert and Wagner may be mentioned *en passant*). Of this demonstrable fact I am not going to enter into any explanation, because it has all been explained to the last degree of thoroughness, by Wagner himself, and by a score of other musical publicists from Schumann and Berlioz to Fuller-Maitland and Alfred Kalisch. Such familiar untitled concert works as Mozart's G minor Symphony and Schumann's Piano Concerto, are veritably and indisputably tone poems; as also are innumerable compositions of a smaller compass by composers like Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Liszt, or, in more modern times, Tchaikovsky and Debussy.

These works, great or small, were not called tone poems by their composers. I am not sure at what date that term began to be used as a title for musical compositions. It seems probable that it was Liszt, with his Symphonic Poems, who really set the ball rolling; and it is noteworthy that Liszt composed those Symphonic Poems of his at a period in his life when he was coming strongly under the influence of Wagner. It seems likely enough that, in fastening this apparently superfluous word "poem" to a work of music, Liszt was deliberately going to work to give a practical illustration of those theories of Wagner's, which the latter had already expressed musically in the Overtures to *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhauser*. Beethoven or Wagner or Mendelssohn would have called those works Overtures, and left it to the public to appreciate the poetry contained in them to the best of its ability.

But there is a further significance in the association of Liszt with the Symphonic Poem. With Liszt—the self-conscious, self-advertising tone poet of the second half of his career—began that unhappy phase in the development of modern music which we call the Post-Romantic phase. I call it an unhappy phase, because, as I see it, the result of the developments which then took birth has been thoroughly bad, with scarcely a relieving gleam to be seen anywhere. Great music has, indeed, taken shape since the days of Liszt. But this great music has

been the work of a few self-centered, independent individuals with sufficient strength of character to be impervious to all contemporary influences of fashion, or even custom. This great music, in short, has no essential connection with the period in which it took shape.

This post-romantic phase came to its full development in a period extending roughly from the death of Liszt in 1886, to the emergence into the full light of day of composers like Sibelius, Delius and Manuel de Falla about thirty years later. Modern critics, when they forget themselves so far as to give ear to the typical music of Grieg, Goldmark, MacDowell, Humperdinck and the earlier Elgar, are apt to throw their minds back imaginatively to antimacassars and what-nots, and photo-screens, and framed oleographs, and the like—the domestic appurtenances of what we, in England, call the Victorian age. But this is wrong. The typical music of that age was *Tristan*, *The Ring*, the Brahms Symphonies, *Les Troyens* and *Carmen*, and the Manzoni *Requiem* of Verdi. (And the typical literary product was *Anna Karenina*, *Jude the Obscure*, and the poetry of Whitman and Browning). No, the bad period in music was the "Greenery Gallery, Grosvenor Gallery" period in art; the era of Aubrey Beardsley, and the Yellow Book, and Henry James, and Maria Corelli. And its most typical product in music is the art of Richard Strauss.

It is not my business here to make a cockshy of any particular composer. Let it suffice to say that it was just at that period that the Tone-Poem (so designated) came into its own, and musicians focussed (and wasted) their energies trying to illustrate certain inner meanings alleged to reside in certain works of literature. I do not say that the result was always bad music, for quite obviously it was not—these people knew their job as musicians: but I do say that for the time being music lost its way; and I say with yet more emphasis that many of the unfortunate later developments, wherewith the modern concert-goer is bored and irritated, took shape as a reaction against all that heavy, savage sentimentalism, that simian nostalgia, that bellowing and braying of great blonde beasts. And I say also that most of this post-romantic tone poetry is

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completely defective as poetry, simply because it is the embodiment of self-conscious high art. And, when one speaks of high art, it is just as well to remember that there is more than one meaning to the word "high." If you desire to appreciate this post-romantic stuff, your best plan is to forget all its associations, and consider it as absolute music. Even so, most of it makes a very poor show compared with the absolute music of the great age.

I believe that Elgar himself, essentially a man of his period, was painfully aware that he was right off the main road, and travelling nowhere. When the air resounded with his praises, and the solemn platitudinarians were cudgelling their brains to discover the profound truth smothered beneath the polyphonic sludge of the A flat Symphony; when Arthur Nikisch had failed to convince the public that anything in that work was worth listening to after the first hundred bars; the composer came out with the revealing observation: "When I listen to Beethoven's C minor Symphony, I feel like a travelling tinker looking at the Forth Bridge". Elgar did not call that Symphony of his a Tone-Poem (with the capitals and the hyphen); but he ought to have done so. It is a rare and precious example of post-romantic tone poetry. It is also a melancholy example of wasted effort on the part of a man who wrote very fine music indeed whenever he managed to forget his *fin de siècle* environment.

All this amounts to a belated grumble, and I suppose somebody will be saying: "Well, you are pretty good at finding fault, but can you suggest a remedy?" Wagner's remedy for winter storms was the mild effulgence of spring. The only remedy I can suggest is something of that sort. It may declare itself to us in recognizable form when somebody comes along who is a poet to the depths of his being, and a musician to the tips of his fingers, and a full-blooded lover of life into the bargain. He has not come along yet, and I doubt if the portents of the present age are very encouraging to that sort of individualist. The Tone-Poets have gone, but the schools of musical thought remain; and these we shall have to endure "until the times do alter". We are not compelled to pay the slightest attention to them; it is only the poor concert-reporter who has to do that.

Editorial Notes

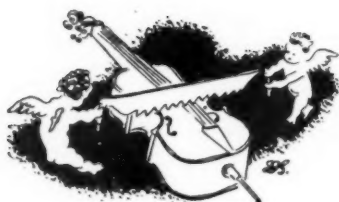
(Continued from page 214)

Considering that our correspondent's original complaint against this recording was a lack of balance between the orchestra and the piano, the results he obtained after changing the crystal cartridge in his pickup should offer a guide for others to follow. His experience with needles should not be taken as a general one; it is *his* experience with his own equipment. Several other correspondents have written us that they have obtained diametrically opposite results with the same series of needles on their equipment. Those who use Acton needles will find that the type RF-12A are best with Victor records, and type M-130 are best with Columbia. These needles should not be used for more than two 12-inch record faces. The Victor Red Seal, which seems to be an all-around good needle on most commercial equipment can be used on four to six 12-inch record surfaces; much of this depends on the weight of one's pickup. The individual should ascertain the number of times to use a needle himself, since conditions and circumstances are hardly the same in any two cases.

In his article, *A Summary to Needle Experiments* (October 1945), Dr. Matthew T. Jones said replacing the cartridge in the Astatic B-10 pickup with that of the L-25 pickup would improve reproduction. A number of readers have asked how this can be done and Dr. Jones has supplied that information to us. He says:

"The Astatic B-10 pickup may be made to give improved performance by the substitution of the L-25 for the B-2 cartridge with which this pickup is usually equipped. Since the L-25 cartridge is shallow and wide while the B-2 is deep and narrow, a different means for anchoring the cartridge must be devised. This may be accomplished by attaching a U-shaped yoke to the top of the cartridge by two screws through the mounting holes. This yoke should have sufficient strength and

(Continued on page 244)



A SURVEY OF CHAMBER MUSIC

By Peter Hugh Reed

This is the eleventh article in the editor's survey of chamber music on records. The series began in October 1943 and has appeared intermittently since then.

Joseph Haydn

Part 3

Before reviewing the next quartet, the famous *C major* (known as the *Emperor*), I might digress to speak of one quality in Haydn that is ever apparent, but strikingly so in the whole of *Opus 76*. That is his assurance. Essentially, he was the willing servant creating cheerful, bright and happy music because that was what the Esterhazy's wanted. Had it been in Haydn's nature to have been passionate, there might have been less confidence in his music, and hence less of that attribute of all great art, serenity. In his gravest movements, Haydn does not express despair, and when he is sad it is in a tranquil manner. To him, it has been said, the established institutions of rich and poor were a matter of Divine Command. That is why the Revolution, which destroyed so much he believed in during his old age, shocked him greatly. Had he not accepted the pattern of life which circumstances brought to him, there would have been less confidence in his art.

In 1797, Prince Esterhazy (the younger) entertained the Grand Duke Joseph of Aus-

tria at his estate in Eisenstadt. In the course of the celebrations, the Duke having expressed a desire for a new quartet by Haydn, a new one was duly performed. This was the *C major, Opus 76, No. 3*, upon the second movement of which Haydn based the beautiful melody *Gott erhalte unsern Kaiser* (God preserve the Emperor), his favorite air, which he had written eight months earlier—an air that subsequently was adopted as the Austrian National Anthem and became as popular as any hymn tune in the churches. The Grand Duke's visit was an imposing event, and Haydn's quartet suited the occasion. The tonal richness and volume of sound bespeak the composer's artistic assurance. Some feel that the work suggests at times that it may have been conceived originally for a larger medium. Attention is called by Cecil Gray to the extensive employment of double-stopping, "very rare in Haydn"; it begins almost immediately and abounds in the first and last movements. A volume could be written on the sequential perfection of Haydn's quartets; even in those works where he seemingly permits our interest to lag in the middle movements, the rightness of his succession can hardly be questioned.

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Almost always particularly aware of beginnings and endings, Haydn catches his listeners' attention immediately, and sends them away with the most satisfied feelings. In his finest works—such as the present one—he almost commands their attention with his masterful opening, and never for a moment, not even in the seemingly simple formula of his Minuet, does he let their interest lag.

Two Great Works

The two quartets forming *Opus 77*, written in 1799, four years before Haydn's death, are the ripened grain of the last of a long succession of ever enriching harvests. "Papa" Haydn's older artistic children have grown and matured, but unlike some elderly parents who in real life beget weaklings, Haydn brings forth two strong, vivacious and beautiful offspring. So convincingly are these two quartets written for four strings, one can hardly believe that they were first composed in the form of sonatas for piano and violin (or flute). Both of these works have been recorded by the Pro Arte's.

The opening movement of the *G major Quartet, No. 1* possesses the characteristics of a buoyant march. The first violinist announces the main theme, which dominates the movement from beginning to end. The second violin and the viola play important roles in this movement, a fact that has caused one writer to say they must be technically the first violin's equal. The Adagio, which follows, betrays here and there the fact that this work was originally written for piano and violin, yet the symphonic character of this movement as a whole suggests it might have been made into a concerto. "To match the virility of the minuet and trio" of this quartet, says Cobbett "one must turn to the *F minor Quartet* of Beethoven." What an irresistible thing is the last movement, which is said to be based upon a theme of popular or folk-song character.

The *Quartet in F major, No. 2* is the last completed product by Haydn in the form. Tovey contends that except for a couple of the last symphonies it is his greatest instrumental work. Cecil Gray first calls the *G major Quartet* the finer work, but reverses his position later. Gray's original notes to this work are of the utmost value, since he brings out a number of important points which do much to enhance the listener's enjoyment and

understanding of the work. The annotator of the notes provided by RCA-Victor takes the view that analysis of this music is scarcely necessary. I quote from Gray's original notes:

"The most striking stylistic feature of the present work consists in its strongly marked Mozartean character. The personalities and styles of the two masters are widely different when one looks at their work as a whole, but there are isolated examples which might conceivably have been written by either of them, and this is one of those works. But needless to say, no disparagement is implied. If this quartet were by Mozart, one could only say it was Mozart at his best; certainly none of his own quartets surpasses it.

"This Mozartean character comes out firstly, in clarity, precision and classical symmetry of form . . . secondly, in the prevalence of eight-bar periods, whereas Haydn often shows a marked predilection for asymmetrical groupings of five, six, seven, nine or ten bars; thirdly, in the cultivation of a vein of chromatic harmony which we associate far more readily with Mozart than with Haydn." The first movement reflects most strongly the spirit of Mozart; the Minuetto, which follows, that of Beethoven. The lovely Andante, in variation style, is harmonically rich and beautifully melodic. The finale, more complex formally and built on a larger scale than is usual with Haydn, is an imposing climax not alone to this composition but to the notable work the composer has accomplished in the perfection of the string quartet form. It should be observed that although the Pro Arte ensemble gives an appreciable account of both these scores, they have not achieved the final word. And so it is to be hoped that these two remarkable quartets will in time be entrusted to a more vital group.

The "Unfinished"

There is an unfinished quartet by Haydn, in B flat, Opus 103, of which the Menuetto has been performed on records by the Busch Quartet (final side of Columbia set 543); the deeply felt Andante, of which Tovey has much to say, has never been recorded. The Menuetto is well written and deserves a better fate than its use as a mere encore (after a Beethoven Quartet) as we hear it in the performance of the Busch Quartet.

The arrangements of the quartets in the eight Society sets, issued originally in England between 1932 and 1939, are as follows:

Vol. I (H.M.V. set—1932—now out of print)

C major, Op. 20, No. 1

C major, Op. 33, No. 3

G major, Op. 77, No. 1

Vol. II (H.M.V. set—1933—now out of print)

D major, Op. 33, No. 6

G major, Op. 54, No. 1

C major, Op. 54, No. 2

G minor, Op. 74, No. 3

Vol. III (Victor set 525)

F major, Op. 3, No. 5

E flat major, Op. 33, No. 2

E flat major, Op. 64, No. 6

B flat major, Op. 71, No. 1

Vol. IV (Victor set 526)

F minor, Op. 20, No. 5

E flat major, Op. 50, No. 3

C major (Emperor), Op. 76, No. 3

Vol. V (Victor set 527)

D major, Op. 20, No. 4

F major, Op. 74, No. 2

F major, Op. 77, No. 2

Vol. VI (Victor set 528)

C major, Op. 1, No. 6

E major, Op. 54, No. 3

A major, Op. 55, No. 1

G major, Op. 64, No. 4

Vol. VII (Victor set 689)

B flat major, Op. 3, No. 4

D major, Op. 50, No. 6

B flat major, Op. 64, No. 3

C major, Op. 74, No. 1

Vol. VIII (Victor set 595)

B flat major, Op. 1, No. 1

E flat major, Op. 20, No. 1

B flat major, Op. 55, No. 3

B flat major, Op. 76, No. 4

Since these sets cannot be broken up by the purchaser, it might be well to recommend for those who have not acquired any of them an order of purchase. The most desirable volume of all, as I stated in my original reviews of the sets, is Vol. V (Victor set 527), containing three great works. Next in line would be Vol. III. Subsequent purchases I leave up to the buyer; Vols. VI and VIII vie with each other, and—for that matter—Vols. VII and IV, which I would place last on the list, offer a similar problem. It is un-

fortunate that Vols. I and II are no longer available; something should be done about this.

A Neglected Work

The *Seven Last Words of Christ*, Opus 51, does not belong to Haydn's quartet literature, despite the fact that he permitted it to be included in the collection. The work, consisting of seven adagios, originally for orchestra, was composed in 1785 for a Good Friday Service in the Cathedral of Cadiz in Spain. Later, Haydn arranged the work for chorus and for string quartet. It is said to have been a special favorite of his, and some writers declare that he ranked it above all his other compositions. One wonders which of the three forms of the work the composer liked best. To my way of thinking this is not one of Haydn's most substantial works in the string quartet form, even though it contains some pages of searching beauty. The fact that the score was composed for a definite religious function and that to each of the seven main parts was appended one of the seven last utterances of the Saviour has given a significance which its inspirational content does not always bear out. There are nine sections to the score—an introduction, seven slow movements, and a final presto reprenative of the earthquake which took place at the time of the Crucifixion. There is reason to believe, since the score of the string quartet version does not quote the words of the Saviour, that Haydn intended this form of the work to be heard as absolute music, apart from any religious implications other than the title. It is in this manner that I would recommend that listeners approach this music.

The introduction is a broadly written movement within itself, and in it can be found the seeds of the succeeding seven adagios. The movements that have proved most expressive to me are the first, second, fifth and sixth. In the recording, the music of the sixth is labelled the seventh; this is unfortunate, since Haydn intended his seventh to flow directly into the Earthquake movement, and the two are related by key signature. The recording of this work by the Primrose String Quartet (Victor set 757) is among the best interpretations of Haydn's quartet music on records. A considerate attention to tonal coloring and fine phrasing

prevails throughout the performance. A performance of the choral version of this work, by soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Tokyo Academy (Columbia set 297), fails to impress me as much as the quartet arrangement; it is a capable rendition, but the voices of the Oriental singers are unpleasant to my ears and certainly the ancient reproduction is hardly more than adequate. Heard in either version, the work as a whole tends to be tedious, and I have found that sections of it, particularly those I have mentioned, are enjoyed best apart from the whole. One can insert one or two in a quartet concert; to my way of thinking, three sections would be acceptable and preferable in public performances.

Haydn's Trios

Tovey calls the musical contents of many of the Haydn trios "glorious", and bids us remember that "the main thing to bear in mind is that Haydn takes the view that a quartet is a symphony, whereas a piano trio is an accompanied solo". Thus, Tovey places these works in a different world entirely, a world which once one enters it, I must admit, has its own enchantment. Yet, strange as it may seem, I have been impelled to enter this smaller realm less often than the larger. It is well to remember that at the time Haydn wrote these works a new style of composition, in which the keyboard instrument assumed greater importance, was in vogue. His trios seem largely duos between the violin and the piano, and often the violin is employed in doing nothing more than doubling the upper part of the piano line; the cello mainly follows the bass of the keyboard instrument and, one suspects, could often be deleted without great loss. Considering the nature of these works, it is my feeling that the harpsichord would serve them to greater advantage than the piano; the blend of the violin and the older keyboard instrument would create a more cogent balance when doubling melodies than is possible with the violin and the piano.

The *Trio in G major*, with the famous Gypsy rondo, is one of Haydn's mature works in the form, and among the last he wrote; yet it is called No. 1 in the B. & H. publications. Few who have heard the recording of this work by Cortot, Thibaud and Casals (Victor discs 3045/46 or H.M.V. DA895/96)

have not been completely captivated by the spontaneity of this music. All the trios are of three movements only. The G major opens with a set of rondo variations, and is followed by a simple songful Adagio. The Rondo all'Ongarese is the most elaborate movement. Despite the informality of the opening movement, Haydn instantly arrests the listeners' attention with the melodic charm of his writing; but it is the finale which remains in one's mind long after the last note has died away in silence. Thus, the master of endings is again in evidence. Who can resist such gaiety as he conjures up here? But one should not lose sight of the lovely opening Andante, nor fail to appreciate the tranquil beauty of the Adagio. A recording of this work, issued in England by Columbia (discs DX1054/55) and enlisting the services of Eileen Joyce (piano), Henry Holst (violin), and Anthony Pini (cello), has not come my way, but an English reviewer contends that "balance, tone and interpretation are of the highest excellence and so is the recording."

A Society Set

Issued since the war began are three trios—No. 2 in F sharp minor, No. 3 in C major, and No. 5 in E flat major—played by Lili Krauss (piano), Simon Goldberg (violin), and Anthony Pini (cello) (Haydn Trio Society, Vol. I—English Parlophone release). Undoubtedly, when peace returns these admirable artists will be permitted to continue the perpetuation of Haydn's world of happy contentment—that world to which the trios so easily transport us. Cecil Gray, who has written the notes for the Trio Society, thinks these works are all late. He says Haydn's "piano trios are rather enlarged sonatas (for piano) . . . the function of the violin is largely, and that of the cello almost wholly, coloristic." The opening movement of the C major has a thoughtful mood; one writer says that clouds pass across its surface. But gaiety is the keynote of the work considered in its entirety; we find it in the coda to the slow movement and in the vivacious finale. The fine quality of the slow movements of both the F sharp minor and the E flat major suggest that Haydn intended these to be the center of gravity in both works. The first is deeply reflective in character; the last is full of "heart-easing beauty." The performance and recording of these works are excellently accomplished.

Curt Sachs includes the *Trio No. 5 in E flat major* in his *Anthologie Sonore*, Vol. VI (discs 55/56). The work is well played by Jacques Fevrier (piano), Jean Fournier (violin), and Pierre Fournier (cello), but with the single exception of the gay finale the playing does not match that of the above group. Mr. Fevrier does not bring the tonal variety to the first and second movements which Miss Krauss conveys. Moreover, the recording of these movements is not as well accomplished as the finale. The value of this last recording is substantiated, however, by the inclusion of the slow movement from the *Trio No. 3 in A major*, by Franz Xaver Richter (1709-1789) (second face of disc 56).

The Haydn *Trio No. 30 in D major*, played by Albert Leveque (piano), Rene Le Roy (flute), and Lucien Kirsch (cello) (Musicraft set No. 8), is an appealing work with the inimitable good-humored beginning and ending characteristic of Haydn, and a plaintive middle movement. This trio is one of three which Haydn wrote in 1789 at the instigation of an English music publisher, who particularly requested some trios with the flute. Here, again, Haydn makes his piano part the most prominent; the flute, however, is given important thematic material, but the cello remains subordinate. This music does not have sufficient distinction to warrant more than occasional hearings. The performance and the recording are splendidly achieved.

Divertimenti

The *Four Divertimenti*, for flute and strings, Opus 100 (Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 6), played by Rene Le Roy (flute), Jean Pasquier (violin), and Etienne Pasquier (cello) (Musicraft set 17), are rendered more important by virtue of the almost inimitable performances of the players. These works belong to

a set of six composed by Haydn in 1784 for an English publisher. Flute-playing was a very popular pastime with British amateurs in those days, and "after hearing these works, one can well imagine," said Nathan Broder in his review of these pieces, "the delight their publication must have occasioned in the hearts of English flautists. True to their name, these pieces are smooth and cheerful, attempting no recondite modulations or probing of emotional depths. They are blessed with an expert performance.... Each divertimento is complete on one disc, and each disc furnishes a very pleasant seven or eight minutes."

Haydn wrote about thirty trios for strings and other combinations, not all of which are in print. The Pasquier Trio has recorded an unidentified Menuet and Fugue from one of these works (Columbia disc 69687-D). It hardly seems possible that these pieces are a complete work within themselves. Although among the lighter things that Haydn wrote, they are quite enjoyable for their own sake and for the sterling musicality of the Pasquier brothers. The Menuet has a friendly graciousness and the fugue is decidedly genial. (The reverse face of the record contains the valued reproduction of Purcell's *Fantasia No. 3 in Three Parts*.)

Amateurs will find the Haydn trios worth looking up. By and large they do not pose the technical problems to be found in the quartets. The amateur violinist who has a good pianist companion can play these works without the cellist, but the violinist should not feel slighted if the pianist has the best part of the proceedings. One pianist of my acquaintance claims that the trios can be played as solos on the keyboard instrument, but since there are a fine selection of piano sonatas by Haydn there seems no reason for neglecting them.



BOOK REVIEWS

COMPOSER AND CRITIC: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF MUSICAL CRITICISM, by Max Graf. W. W. Norton, \$3.75.

▲Let it be said right off that Max Graf's book does not concern itself with the necessary but evanescent hack work that chronicles the efforts of interpretive musicians in the daily press. He deals with musical criticism in a higher sense, as it reveals the artistic tenor of an age; and he considers the critic not as a mere journalist but as either the arbiter or the mouthpiece of an esthetic period. What George Saintsbury did for literature many years ago in his monumental *History of Criticism*, Max Graf has performed today, albeit on a smaller scale, in *Composer and Critic*. It is a milestone in the development of that modern movement to accord the history of music the same intellectual and critical status as has been given literature, painting, and architecture.

If nothing else, *Composer and Critic* should dispose once and for all with the worn out shibboleth that the great musical geniuses worked in a spiritual vacuum, ignored or spat upon by their contemporaries. The truth of the matter is that in its 200 years of existence, musical criticism has never failed to bring the work of an important contemporary composer before the public and to supply advocates on either side for assessing its value as enduring art. One of the favorite tricks of musical antiquarians is to pull out of musty periodicals choice bits of inanity wherein some fat-head flays the first performance of a work that subsequently came to be judged an imperishable masterpiece. But this sort of thing, however diverting in small doses, serves no useful purpose in a work of this kind. It is to Mr. Graf's great

credit that he only considers a misvaluation of a great composer when it illustrates a general critical doctrine of the times.

Such a case was that of Johann Adolph Scheibe, a critic espousing the esthetic of the Age of Reason, which demanded of all art naturalness, rationality, and lucidity. This Boileau of music could not stomach the Baroque art of J. S. Bach with its ornate figuration and high-flown imagination. He lost no time in saying so, averring that Bach "keeps naturalness away from his compositions by employing bombastic and intricate devices and darkening beauty with over-elaborate art". What strikes us as remarkable about this failure to recognize Bach's genius is that it runs completely counter to our modern notion of the obtuse critic versus the great artist. For is it not an accepted dictum now that the critic who fails in the appreciation of a contemporary artist must perforce be a reactionary and pedantic old fogey with his ideas and values hopelessly rooted in the past? Scheibe upsets this general belief; his trouble was an excess of modernity. So imbued was he with the new esthetic principles, that the greatest flowering of Baroque musical art proved utter anathema to him.

Within thirty years of Bach's death music had caught up with the new critical outlook. Mozart and Haydn were, by and large, in tune with their critics, and it was not until Beethoven introduced the element of Romanticism into music that the critics of the Age of Reason began to cavil. However, they were soon superseded by a new school, for in the Romantic period of the early 19th century "criticism the muse's handmaid proved", and there was ushered in an era when the critic trumpeted to all and sundry

(Continued on page 244)

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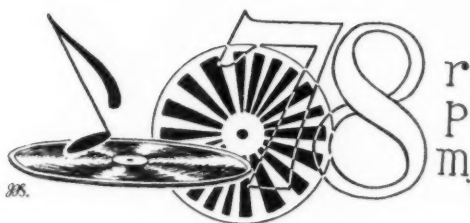
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RECORD NOTES AND R E V I E W S

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We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

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Orchestra

ADDINSELL: *Prelude and Waltz*, from Noel Coward's Film *Blithe Spirit*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Muir Mathieson. Columbia disc 7441-M, price \$1.00.

▲ This is the same Addinsell who wrote the popular *Warsaw Concerto*. His latest opus is typical movie music probably dealing with and suitably realizing a situation. Not having seen the picture I cannot state just where and when the excerpts come in it. Those who admired his earlier work will undoubtedly find this music of interest, but it is by no

means as pretentious. It is excellently played and recorded. —P.G.



BATH: *Cornish Rhapsody*, from the English film *Love Story*; played by Vladimir Sokoloff (piano) and Henri René and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 25-1052, price 50c.

▲ And now, we have what would seem to be an abridged version of the sentimental movie morceau which Columbia issued last month, played by Harriet Cohen and the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer. All things being equal, in so far as sentiment and musical values are concerned, I think this version has something to commend it over the other one. In the first place Sokoloff is far more "in the groove" than Miss Cohen; he cuts loose and plays in a more appropriately objective manner. Someone has said that Bath seems to have been imitating Addinsell, but I'd say he was nearer to Tchaikovsky just as Addinsell was near to Rachmaninoff. Familiarity in matters like this seems to breed not contempt but popularity. If Henri René's orchestra is not a London Symphony, it suffices in music of this kind. Victor has provided equally as brilliant a recording, too. —P.G.

DOHNANYI: *Suite for Orchestra, Opus 19*; played by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles, direction of Alfred Wallenstein. Decca set DA-433, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Mr. Wallenstein, intentionally or not, turns the clock back for many record buyers and brings us a new version of a work that was a best seller back in the early 'thirties. It was in 1929, to be exact, that Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra first recorded this genial work for Victor (M-47). Among the early Victor releases of the Chicago Orchestra, that set remained a favorite with a lot of folks.

Dohnanyi, born in 1877, is a Hungarian. His music has an affinity with Brahms in that it combines classic tendencies with late romanticism. He writes easily, warmly and with melodic freshness. This orchestral *Suite*, long popular in the concert hall, is by no means dated; it has a wholesomeness and a buoyancy that stamp it in the memory. Time has not diminished our appreciation of this work, and so what our good friend, W. R. Anderson, said of this opus in *The Gramophone* when the older recording was released in England in 1931 can be repeated in part here. Anderson said:

"I have elsewhere spoken of Dohnanyi as a 'good companion', and this *Suite* is an excellent way of linking arms with him, especially for the first time; but there will be readers, I hope, who have not met the genial composer before. . . . Dohnanyi delights the musician because he knows his job inside out. His ideas often are fresh, and when they are not, he varies his phrase-lengths, and puts in a few extensions that remind one of Handel's dodges; he rambles easily among the keys, and slips around the corner from one to another with more than Schubertian slipperiness. He can carry off a broad, sentimental tune, without making us feel either that he is apologizing for it, or pretending it is the world's most precious discovery. Above all, he enjoys himself all the way; therefore, so do we. . . . Dohnanyi, thank heaven, does not rely on other people's tunes, least of all folk tunes. . . . He is original, but not pains-fully so." Anderson speaks about the composer's gift for handling the variation form, which can be boring enough on occasion, and we have a happy example

in the opening movement here of Dohnanyi's skill in this form. The second movement is a neatly contrived Scherzo with a hint of orientalism. The third is a gracious, unpretentious Romance, and the finale "a delightfully built Rondo, with tunes to hum, will be liked best of all."

It has been some time since we have heard the Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles. Mr. Wallenstein took it over, I believe, two years ago, and his splendid disciplinary work shows up in the incisiveness of the string playing. His performance is forthright, well-defined and unpretentious, but he lacks the romantic graciousness of Frederick Stock. Moreover, there are many instances in which one realizes the L. A. Orchestra is not comparable to the Chicago Symphony. Especially is this true in the woodwind and other solos. Curiously, even today, the old Chicago set, despite its limited range of dynamics, sounds better than this new one. The quality of the recording here suggests a studio; the string tone is often tight and there is a lack of essential spaciousness behind the ensemble. Decca's surfaces are relatively smooth in sound but they played havoc on needles for us, and we found it necessary on one or two sides to employ two needles for good reproduction. One wishes that Stock had done this work over before his untimely death, but maybe some other conductor will consider giving us a new performance. —P.H.R.



GOMEZ (arr. Jungnickel): *Il Guarany—Overture*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 11-9112, price \$1.00.

▲ The Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Gomez (1836-1896) studied music at the Conservatory of Milan and later found fame and success in the opera houses of Italy. Although he is said to have utilized Amazon-Indian themes in his opera, *Il Guarany*, they are not readily apparent in the overture. Stylistically this composition stems from the 19th-century Italian operatic school, and owes much to Verdi. The melodramatic qualities of this music are definitely dated. Listening to the music makes us think of red plush curtains and a gaslit auditorium.

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—P.H.R.



GROFÉ: *Grand Canyon Suite*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M or DM-1038, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ One cannot help wondering why Toscanini elected to conduct this work. It is not a great score, although few would deny its effectiveness. As in other compositions, Grofé here takes an essentially popular idiom and treats it symphonically. But the ideas are too literal; there is little leeway for imagination on the part of the listener. Other composers have written descriptive music and kept some of the most obvious effects from becoming banal. The storm section of Beethoven's *Pastoral* is one of many examples; it illustrates the difference between inspiration and talent. Grofé's donkey in the third section, *On the Trail*, is however no better or worse than Strauss' bleating sheep in *Don Quixote*; both composers are simply showing how realistic they can be in music. But Strauss' bleating sheep have not as yet become a theme motif for a radio program, which can tend to make such music intolerable to a lot of people. Perhaps Toscanini feels there is a parallel between Grofé and Rossini—the Rossini of the *William Tell* overture in particular, which is, as all of us know, purely descriptive music. But granting that some of us have grown mortally tired of the Rossini overture, it has a dramatic power lacking in the present work. All of which will not affect those who profess to like this American suite which has become as familiar as airplanes and soap operas in the course of its 15 years of existence. It seems idle to me to censure the beloved Maestro because he elects to walk in the street with ordinary folk and to cater to their likes for a change. His musical tastes have always been eclectic and this is a laudable trait in any man.

As a performance and a recording, this set is unrivalled in record history. Being what he is, an extremely honest musician and interpreter, Toscanini takes no liberties with the composer; we find none of thier *rubat*

the lingering over phrases, that others like to indulge in in music of this kind. The Maestro has lavished as much care in the molding of this performance as he has on a Beethoven symphony. In matters of dynamics he brings a wider gamut of coloring and dramatic effect than I have ever heard previously brought to this score. Those who admire Grofé's storm section will be thrilled with its realization here.

The recording is both realistic and sumptuous in sound. It was made, as were a great many other Toscanini discs recently issued, in the spaciousness of Carnegie Hall in New York, not in Studio 8-H, the home of the NBC Symphony. Since we were not previously aware that recent recordings, like the *Leonore No. 3* and *Coriolan* overtures, the Beethoven *First Concerto* and the *Forza del Destino* overture were all recorded in Carnegie Hall, I think it well to pass this information on to interested readers.—P.H.R.



HANDEL: *Concerto for orchestra in D major* (arranged by Eugene Ormandy); played by the Philadelphia orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia disc, 12280-D, price \$1.00.

▲ The unprepared listener to this record may well be surprised at the familiar sound of the first movement. The thematic material here used must have had a strong appeal to the composer, for it served him not only in the famous *Fireworks Music*, but for two orchestral concertos as well. Although the scholars have not succeeded in establishing a definite date for this concerto, it is generally believed to be earlier than the *Fireworks*, for which it may be considered to have served as a sketch. Originally intended, probably, for open air performance, Handel seems to have subsequently added an organ part, which would indicate that it was at some time used on a regular concert program. It has been arranged, and was once recorded, by Sir Hamilton Harty, and to some extent at least Mr. Ormandy seems to have followed the example of his predecessor. In both modern versions the order of the second and third movements has been reversed. Mr. Ormandy ends with a reprise of the opening theme. The conductor keeps to the British

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Abril,

tradition of a Handel of roast beef and ale. The recording is correspondingly heavy and thick, and the surface of the review copy is not of the quietest. —P.L.M.



d'INDY: *Istar—Symphonic Variations, Opus 42* (3 sides); and *Fervaal—Introduction to Act I, Opus 40*; played by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, direction of Pierre Monteux. Victor set SP-16, two discs, price \$2.25.

▲Vincent d'Indy is very definitely a neglected French craftsman. It is no blind admiration that prompted Edward B. Hill, in his book *Modern French Music*, to say that d'Indy has "a broad intellectual grasp and a scope of knowledge that is rare in a musician". We may disagree with his application of these gifts on occasion, but few will deny his striking musicianship and his marked abilities as a craftsman. *Istar* is a case in point. Although it is a singularly scholastic treatment of a choreographic poem, revealing "the fusion of the intellectual and emotional in d'Indy's temperament" (Hill), it is undeniably a tellingly dramatic portrayal of its picturesque subject. In its coalition of intellectualism and emotionalism this music is related to the composer's *Symphony in B flat*, which Monteux has previously recorded (Victor set 943). *Istar* (written in 1896) is in the variation form and undoubtedly had its influence on Strauss employing the same form in *Don Quixote*. The latter was composed in 1897. Prior to *Istar* the variation pattern had not been used in program music.

Istar is based on a French version of an ancient Babylonian poem, quoted in its entirety in the notes with the set. *Istar*, known as the Daughter of Sin, enters the land of the dead, the "seven-gated abode" to free the Son of Life, her young lover. At each of the seven gates she is stripped by the warders of some part of her raiment, until in the end she is nude. Freed of all worldly things she receives the Water of Life and delivers her lover. The ingenuity of d'Indy in handling this theme attests to his remarkable musical perceptions. The theme is not heard in its entirety until the last variation. It is as though d'Indy took the view that *Istar*

herself does not come into her true estate until she is rid of her worldly encumbrances. Full appreciation of the composer's poetic or picturesque significance will be got by following the poem.

Istar has long occupied a place in the orchestral repertory. Although first performed in public in January 1897 in Brussels, under the direction of Eugene Ysaye (to whom the score is dedicated), it was not until 1912 that it was first danced. It is better known as a tone poem, however, than as a ballet.

The opera *Fervaal* has been called a Gallicized fusion of *Siegfried* and *Parsifal*. Although its rich orchestral sonorities show the influence of Wagner, the music is nonetheless stamped with the individuality of d'Indy. Wagner seldom wrote this type of contemplative, emotionally subdued yet quietly lofty music to any of his music dramas without attaining some climax. But d'Indy does not disturb the poetic qualities of his music with a true climax; his is a mood, essentially subdued with its use of muted strings—characteristic of a tone poem.

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Although both of these works have been previously heard on records, it cannot be said that they were heard to the advantage that they are here. Piero Coppola's once admirable performance of *Istar* dates from 1933, and Albert Wolff's recording of the *Fervaal* prelude goes back to 1932. There was none of the fine shading or climactic coloring in those earlier recordings heard here, and I find Monteux's reading of *Istar* more dramatically discerning and rhythmically fluent than Coppola's. Of course, Monteux has the benefits of modern reproduction which Coppola did not have, and the San Francisco Symphony has a tonal sumptuousness on records which one does not hear from the older recording. —P.H.R.



KHRENNIKOV: *Symphony No. 1, Opus 4*; played by the USSR Orchestra, no conductor given (disc 4006), and *The Night Breeze Rustles the Leaves* from Incidental Music to Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*; sung by Prof. A. Doliva (baritone), with Orchestra of the USSR Radio Committee (disc 4007a), and **KHACHATURIAN:** *Lezghinska* from *Dance Suite No. 5*; played by the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra, conducted by V. Nebolsin (disc 4007b). DISC set 753, price \$5.00.

▼Tikhon N. Khrennikov composed his *First Symphony* in 1935, in his twenty-third year, while still pursuing his studies at the Moscow Conservatoire. Prof. Igor Boelza in his *Handbook of Soviet Composers* says that in his early music the composer was influenced by his teacher, Shebalin, as well as Prokofiev and Shostakovich. At the start the influence of Shostakovich is noted, but Khrennikov does not stay under the sway of the *Wunderkind* of the Soviet Union. He seems to know what he wants to say and goes about it in a less pretentious manner; his scoring shows considerable ingenuity and is decidedly more compact. Although one might say there is a strength of purpose in this music, one would hardly call it an imposing symphony. As such works go it is short, and the various sections are played without pause. The first section seems hardly more than a

prelude to the slow one which starts midway through side 1. In his opening and closing sections, the composer tends toward a type of brashness already familiar to us in the music of Shostakovich. The slow section yields a typical plaintive quality and aims for emotional depth without quite achieving it. The listener who likes the music of modern Russia will undoubtedly find this work appealing. It was played with some success in this country ten years ago by Stokowski.

The Khrennikov song is strophic in form and "Latinish" in style; once one has heard its first verse there is nothing more to hear. It is not a bad song of its kind, but it can mean little to those not speaking Russian. Shakespeare, we are told, is very popular in the Soviet Union, but apparently the Russians are not above taking liberties with the Bard of Avon, for to the best of my knowledge there are no verses indicative of a song of this kind in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Aram Khachaturian's *Lezghinska* is a variant of a Caucasian dance and accordingly has a familiar oriental coloring which recalls Borodin, Moussorgsky and others. Boelza tells us that Khachaturian's music "is deeply rooted in the folklore of his native Armenia", and one suspects that this dance owes something to the folklore of Caucasia. The spontaneity and full-blooded character of this music will appeal to many listeners.

The recording of these works may present problems. There is frequently a fuzziness of tonal quality which some may be able to eliminate and others not. I have noticed this fuzziness, as well as surface noise, in many pressings I have obtained from the USSR. The present set is pressed on vinylite, undoubtedly with the idea of eliminating flaws in the original Russian recordings. The interested listener is advised to hear this set before purchasing. Some people will unquestionably be able to reproduce it better than others. The notes to this set, printed on the inside cover, owe much to the book by Prof. Boelza mentioned above, but although whole sentences are repeated verbatim the writer has taken no trouble to give Boelza credit or even to indicate that he is quoting.

—P.H.R.

PROKOFIEFF: *Scythian Suite*, Op. 20 (*Ala and Lolli*); played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Desiré Defauw. Victor set M or DM-1040, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Since Prokofieff's *Scythian Suite* is one of those works that is more talked about than played, these records are doubly welcome to those of us whose curiosity concerning things musical verges on the insatiable.

Having read descriptions of the score by Philip Hale, Lawrence Gilman and others, I was led to expect something pretty sensational, and I cannot say that I was exactly disappointed. There are astonishing, yes, absolutely unique pages in this work written in 1914 by the 23-year-old Prokofieff. One hearing of these records on wide-range listening equipment is sufficient proof of that; but let's begin at the beginning.

Just about one year after Igor Stravinsky's *Pictures of Pagan Russia*, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, had set the musical world on its ears, Serge Prokofieff evidently decided to prepare his own packaged brand of musical TNT based on not too dissimilar subject matter. In the *Scythian Suite* he has evoked for us the rites and legends of that pre-Christian people which once populated a corner of south-eastern Europe. The first movement is a ferocious *Invocation to Veles and Ala*, the sun-god and beloved idol of the Scythians. Then comes an even more frenetic description of *The Evil God and Dance of the Black Spirits*. The tense atmosphere is relaxed somewhat with a slow movement evocative of the terror-haunted *Night*. In the final movement, *The Glorious Departure of Lolli and Procession of the Sun*, Prokofieff tells us of the battle between the Scythian hero, Lolli, and the Evil God, the hero's near subjection and his rescue by the sun-god, Veles. The final pages of this movement constitute a stupendous *tour-de-force* which only Lawrence Gilman has described in even halfway adequate fashion. "This Finale of the *Scythian Suite*," he tells us, "limns for us a pagan dawn as seen through the savagely ecstatic eyes and frenzied brains of sun-worshipping barbarians. The piercing, exultant, hierarchical trumpets, the cumulative radiance of the whole orchestra as the wild men chant their hymn to the dazzling god and the world takes fire, are like nothing else

in the literature of music."

Although the *Scythian Suite* and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* share a common subject matter, it is interesting to note how differently the two composers have approached their task. There is little of Stravinsky's complex rhythmic scheme in Prokofieff's score, and the younger man's instrumentation is far brighter and more transparent. Where Stravinsky seems to think in terms of blocked-off phrases, in Prokofieff's *Suite* there appears to me an inevitability of musical procedure that affects every note of each movement from first to last. To use a visual analogy, Stravinsky makes us aware of strongly stressed vertical planes. While with Prokofieff, everything moves in a generally horizontal, linear direction. Perhaps it is this linear aspect of Prokofieff's musical approach, plus his exploitation of the brighter, more penetrating orchestral timbres, that make his dissonances more piercing than Stravinsky's.

Coming now to matters of performance and recording, I can say right off that I never dreamed the Chicago Symphony Orchestra capable of the breath-taking virtuosity exhibited on these records. Considering the reverberation problems encountered in Chicago's Orchestra Hall, I think Victor's recording job is a remarkable one indeed, particularly as regards tonal and dynamic range.

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—David Hall



RACHMANINOFF: *Isle of the Dead, Opus 29*; (6 sides); played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia Set M or MM-599, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Along with a new recording of the *Second Piano Concerto*, Columbia offers this month another version of Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead*. Those who wish to own a modern recording of this work have a pretty problem before them since there are now two excellent interpretations, that of Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra issued by Victor in December (M-DM 1024) and the present one.

In making a choice one must decide whether or not he wants to have the lusciousness of this score squeezed to the last drop. If we look at the matter purely from the standpoint of tonal splendor, the Koussevitzky set takes the honors. Not only is the Boston Orchestra, in respect to sheer sensuousness of sound, head and shoulders above the Minneapolis organization, but in addition Koussevitzky deliberately exploits to the full the sad-sweet qualities of the music.

This new set by Mitropoulos lacks the tonal warmth of the other version, but withal it is a more musicianly reading. The slower pace (Mitropoulos takes six sides to Koussevitzky's five) allows the music to unfold in a less frenzied manner and more clearly etches the outlines of the score. Formal delineation is never sacrificed for a luscious effect as is sometimes the case with Koussevitzky.

Rapid lovers of Rachmaninoff may cavil at the acerbity of Mitropoulos, but I feel that in the long run his version will wear better. Its dryness of tone and formal severity will become positive virtues when the lavish splendors of the Boston set begin to pall.

The recording is thoroughly adequate, and is not a determining factor in the choice between the two sets.

—R. G.

MUSIC OF TCHAIKOVSKY. Andre

Kostelanetz conducting the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra. Columbia set M-601, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ Not received in time for inclusion in this issue.

Concerto

RACHMANINOFF: *Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18*; played by Gyorgy Sandor (piano) and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M or MM-605, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The recording in this set plays a major role in presenting the music in a different guise from that in which it was previously heard in the two other versions—by the composer, Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra (Victor set 58—1929) and by Moisewitsch, Goehr and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Victor set 666—1938). Here we have a realistic reproduction of the softer qualities of the music, the *pianissimi* which in the concert hall are never blown up as they have been in the earlier recordings. Perhaps some of the *forti* in this set could have been fuller, and certainly some crescendo passages could have been better handled. There is some suggestion of suppression on the part of the engineer at the controls, but in piano recordings loud passages can create disturbing trouble with a lot of pickups, and recording can at best only approximate the full volume of the orchestra. What we get here is a truer facsimile of the intimate qualities of the music; the qualities that Rachmaninoff so beautifully outlined in his own playing in the concert hall but which were inflated in his recording. The piano stands out well and an equitable balance is maintained. The recording is good in the first two movements, but so noticeably more brilliant in the finale that one is led to believe it was made in two sessions. I would not deny that there was a lusciousness of sound in the old Rachmaninoff-Stokowski set and a romantic feeling in the Moisewitsch one, especially on the part of the pianist, which we do not get here. But Sandor and the orchestra both bring about more subtlety

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of shading, and this in itself seems to me something worth noting and appreciating on the part of the listener.

Despite the warmth of feeling one may have for the Rachmaninoff-Stokowski performance, a response I share with others, one must admit the present set has artistic merits that cannot be lightly dismissed. Gyorgy Sandor is a pianist to reckon with. His prodigious technique, his immaculately clean finger work, and his style often call to mind the pianism of his late teacher, Béla Bartok. The incisive tone, marked precision and brilliance evidenced here were qualities associated with Bartok's playing. Sandor's control and steadiness in this concerto parallels Rachmaninoff's; in this respect he is far superior to Moisevitch, whose playing was freer and too romantic in style. The composer brought a richer tone to his octave passages, but I would not be inclined to say his tone was any firmer or more telling than Sandor's. There are passages throughout the work, but more particularly in the *Adagio sostenuto*—so heart-warming to most listeners—in which Sandor's sensitivity of line reveals nuances of the score not to be found in either of the other recordings. Moreover, Sandor plays the slow movement with appreciable poetic feeling, and without exaggeration of its sentiment. I particularly like his crisp, clean playing in the finale, where the climaxes are most effectively achieved in the recording.

Rodzinski meets the pianist more than halfway; his orchestral direction is generally free of the stodginess and over-deliberation of Goehr's, and his phrasing and control are more undeviating than Stokowski's. I would have liked the conductor to have brought out some inner lines more, for example the passages for bassoons and clarinets in the slow section of the finale (side 6) are barely audible, and the flute passages and brushing of the cymbals in this same section of the recording are not so realistically reproduced as in the Moisevitch set. On the whole, however, the orchestral playing is clean and well controlled, and while Rodzinski is by no means self-effacing, by and large he gives the palm to the soloist.

The popularity of this concerto forestalls extended comment. The heart of the work is undeniably the slow movement, but the finale has its definite excitement and Rach-

maninoff was at his best in these two movements. I find the first movement lacking in a salient profile and the writing more often than not labored. But one accepts Rachmaninoff on his own terms, and those who like this concerto would probably not want a note altered. Much of what admirers of the work think was summed up in a remark I heard recently after a performance of it in the concert hall. A gentleman turning to his feminine partner said: "Anyone who says Rachmaninoff did not write a swell concerto should have his gizzard split." —P.H.R.



SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 8 in B minor (Unfinished)*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction of Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M or DM-1039, price \$3.85.

▲Koussevitzky, I am told, has been dissatisfied with his previous recording of this work made ten years ago (Victor set 319). And since his approach to this music is more mellow, more relaxed, this set is no mere duplication, but rather an interesting example of the expansion—or should one say growth—of a great artist on records. One will hardly listen to a half dozen bars before one is conscious that the undercurrent of tension which characterized the earlier recording is gone. Strangely, Koussevitzky has not performed the symphony in Boston for the past three seasons, yet he chose it as one of the first works he wished to record after the recent ban was lifted.

The present performance was made at the

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same session which realized the waxing of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, and mechanically it has much the same characteristics as the latter set, with the distinction that there is less hall resonance here than was evident in the Berlioz. Hence this symphony seems cleaner in its climaxes. This condition may be more the result of the difference between Berlioz's and Schubert's orchestration than of the recording technique.

There is no question in my mind that Koussevitzky's new version of the *Unfinished* is an improvement over the older set; it is more leisurely paced than his previous version, now taking six sides rather than the previous five. The record breaks in the first movement of this new set seem rather abrupt to me; they might have been more judiciously chosen.

Whether the individual listener will prefer Koussevitzky's newest *Unfinished* to his old one or to the widely admired Beecham set, which was recorded in England, is a matter of personal taste.

This recording, I am given to understand, is the first of several Koussevitzky duplications that he has made since the recording ban was lifted. —Martin Bookspan



STRAVINSKY: *The Song of the Nightingale* (*Le Chant du Rossignol*) (5 sides); and CHABRIER: *Joyous March* (1 side); played by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, direction of Eugene Goossens. Victor set M or DM-1041, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Stravinsky's *Rossignol*, originally conceived as an opera, was begun in 1909. It seems to have given him some trouble, and his remark to Calvocoressi is a revealing one: "I can write music to words—that is, songs; or music to action, as ballets; but the co-operation of music, words and action is something that daily is to my mind more and more inadmissible; and if I finish *The Nightingale* I do not think I shall ever try to write another work of the kind." He laid the work aside and concerned himself with the ballets *L'Oiseau de Feu*, *Pétrouchka* and *Le Sacre de Printemps*. Then in 1914 he returned to *Le Rossignol* and completed it. It was produced that same year at the Paris Opéra.

Still apparently not completely satisfied, the composer turned the opera into a ballet, and in that form it was produced at the Opéra in 1920. A second transformation took place at the hands of Mr. Koussevitzky when he brought forth the ballet version as a symphonic poem in Paris in 1922. It is the latter which is here recorded. As an opera it came to the Metropolitan in 1926, with a cast including Marion Talley, Adamo Didur, Gustav Schuetzendorf, Ina Bourskaya and Ralph Erolle. In the ballet and symphonic poem versions the work was called *Le Chant du Rossignol*.

The libretto is based on the famous story of Hans Christian Andersen. Briefly, it concerns the reception of the nightingale at the court of the Chinese Emperor, where its great reputation as a singer had won it a command performance. After a big success, however, it was overshadowed by a mechanical nightingale sent as a gift from the Emperor of Japan, which not only could sing, but was covered with jewels. But in time this toy wore out, and when the Emperor found himself face to face with Death it was the song of the real nightingale, heard through the window, which brought him back to life. The nightingale was now offered the post of Court Musician, but it refused, saying that its place was still in the forest.

The symphonic poem begins with a part of the introduction to the second act of the opera. This is followed by the *Chinese March* to which the court assembled, written in the Pentatonic scale. The nightingale's song is easily recognizable in a cadenza for the flute. The trumpet represents the Japanese envoy and again the nightingale's friend the fisherman. The mechanical nightingale is impersonated by the oboe. A passage in the solo trombone represents Death, and there is a funeral march for the Emperor, which happily proves to be premature. The work ends with the song of the fisherman, reunited with his friend the nightingale.

With this recording the symphonic poem in its entirety makes its first appearance. As may be readily imagined, the score is a colorful and fantastic one, showing Stravinsky at the height of his orchestral virtuosity. Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra have given it a lively and vital performance, and the recording is, for the most part,

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satisfactory, although my machine had some trouble with the flute tone.

As a filler we are given Chabrier's not too important *Joyeuse Marche*. It seems that this composer was requested by the authorities at the Bordeaux Conservatoire to write two piano pieces for use by the young ladies in the sight-reading classes. Chabrier produced a *Prélude Pastorale* and a *Marche Française*, but they were returned to him as being too difficult for the purpose. Chabrier then made them into orchestral pieces. The *Prelude* is forgotten, but its companion, now called *Joyeuse Marche*, has won itself a place among the minor orchestral classics. Again the performance is good, but there is perhaps a bit too much room resonance in the recording. —P.L.M.

Keyboard

LISZT: *Etude in D-flat*; and *Waldestrauchen*; played by Harold Bauer (piano). Victor disc 11-9113, price \$1.00.

▲ Bauer's last Victor disc dates back many years, and it is a pleasure to welcome him back. The veteran has virtually retired, due to ill health, and has not appeared in public for quite a while, confining his efforts to teaching.

About 1940, Schirmer recorded him in the Brahms *F minor Sonata* and an album of miscellaneous works. Those recordings were technically poor, and unfortunately, Victor has not improved matters much here. One of Bauer's earlier recordings for them was the *Etude in D-flat*, and this new version almost sounds as though it were a reissue of that old record. The piano tone competes with a high surface, the instrument appears placed in the background, and the general quality is of a muffled nature. The reverse side sounds much clearer, though it too suffers from more surface noise than I like.

Interpretatively, Bauer's performance is delightful. All of the mannerisms of his generation are present: the rubato, the breaking of chords, the deliberate build-up, the leisurely, satisfactory pace, the rhythmic instinct. He knows when to pause; and the pianism is at all times relaxed, despite some not inconsiderable technical feats.

Neither piece is simple, but the left hand in *Waldestrauchen* (*Forest Murmurs*), which is tricky, emerges with beautiful elasticity. In that selection he rises to a climax that belies his years. Bauer always had a feeling for the dramatic and a sense of proportion, qualities well evident on this disc. If only we can get some Schumann recordings from him! The vigor here displayed shows that the *C major Fantasy* would easily be in his fingers, and the Victor catalogue badly needs the *Novelettes*, *Nachtstuecke*, or the *Sonata in F-sharp minor*. —H.C.S.



PIANO MUSIC OF LISZT. Played by Gyorgy Sandor. Columbia set M or MM-602, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Not received in time for inclusion in this issue.

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✓ PROKOFIEFF: *Sonata No. 7, Op. 83*; played by Vladimir Horowitz (piano): Victor set M or DM-1042, two discs, price \$2.85.

▲ Horowitz introduced this sonata to America, and this is its first recorded performance. It was composed, according to the printed music, in 1939-1942. Russia was at its most serious moment those days, and the sonata is a musical reflection of what was going on in Russian minds. Not that it is programmatic; nowhere does the composer give an indication of anything specific. The music, however, is restless, percussive, and forceful. One would have to be very insensitive not to feel the grim quality. The contours of the first movement are broken time and again, and the *andantino* is a pleading, soaring melody. One notices a strongly Slavic flavor there which is not obvious anywhere else in the sonata. In the second movement occurs a lush theme that for all the world sounds as though it were going to break into *White Christmas*. That does not last long. An agitated section follows, and the opening theme is restated only briefly at the end. The finale is a toccato-like movement marked *precipitato*.

Horowitz seems more at home here than in the Chopin selections issued last month. He never was much of a colorist. His approach is big and he has a technique to match, but often he preoccupies himself with details and loses a certain improvisatory quality. Apparently he has imagination and intelligence, but not much poetry. This sonata is virile music and is played with masculine strength. The mood throughout is of iron and jagged marble blocks. On paper the music does not look too difficult; at the keyboard one discovers that it requires a large stretch, strong wrists, an agile, independent left hand, and a knowledge of how to bring out inner voices. It is not pianistic in the Chopin-Liszt-Ravel sense; rather it is highly percussive, clanging and metallic.

Nobody has ever disputed the power of Horowitz's wrists, and his interpretation of the first two movements is highly impressive. Everything is clear. No jumble is present in the *fortissimi*, the finger work sounds pro-

perly detached, the quieter passages sing out. Only in one place—the *piu largamente* section of the slow movement—is there a sort of hash, and that is more due to the limitations of recording than to Horowitz. However, the third movement is disappointing to me. It is marked *precipitato*, but the pianist takes it much slower than indicated. As a result, there is not the feeling of inevitable rising climax that it might have, and some excitement is lost.

On the whole the recording is excellent, although there was a slight thud a little after the middle of the first side—a defect which may be only in my copy. The surface level is reasonably quiet except for side three.

—H.C.S.

Violin

ACHRON (arr. Auer): *Hebrew Melody*; and SIBELIUS: *Ma:urka, Opus 81, No. 1*; played by Mischa Elman (violin) with Leopold Mittman at the piano. Victor disc 11-9111, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Elman has selected two new works to record from his extensive repertoire. The Achron-Auer *Hebrew Melody* has long been popular with violinists and more especially with those who studied under Auer. It is a quasi-oriental composition, melodically plaintive, and allows the violinist ample scope for a rich songful style.

The Sibelius work is one of five short pieces for violin and piano which he wrote in 1915. It is salon music, certainly not representative of Sibelius at his best. Moreover, it strikes one as lacking the true creative urge which we feel in his more important works. In turning to this essentially Polish dance form, Sibelius does not seem to have been completely at his ease.

Both compositions give Mr. Elman ample opportunities to exploit his tonal richness and stylistic freedom. He is in fine form in both pieces, and one cannot deny that he has few peers in exploiting music of this kind. Mr. Mittman gives him able support and the recording is well balanced.

—P.H.R.

Voice

ADAMS: *The Bells of St. Mary's*; and MALOTTE: *The Lord's Prayer*; sung by the Victor Chorale, conducted by Robert Shaw. Victor disc 11-9155, price \$1.00.

▲ Although I must profess to having no admiration for arrangements of this kind, which follow a far too familiar pattern of radio technique, I must admit that Shaw and his Victor Chorale do some fine work in both selections. The clarity of line and the clear diction are qualities all too rare in choral groups. Mr. Shaw is to be commended on his expert direction and the care he has taken in shaping these pieces. It will make them that much more pleasurable to those who acquire them. The recording is good.—P.G.



BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio*—*Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin.*; sung by Rose Bampton (soprano), with NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 11-9110, price \$1.00.

▲ Rose Bampton, it will be remembered, sang the part of Leonora in the broadcast performance of *Fidelio* conducted by Maestro Toscanini in December 1944. A comparison between this disc and a recording I had taken off the air in 1944 reveals a marked superiority in favor of the Victor record. During the actual performance both Miss Bampton and the orchestra seemed to have had the jitters and, in this aria at least, there was a certain amount of choppy phrasing and wrong notes. Happily, all is serene in the present recording, with the flaws of the radio performance ironed out.

Most emphatically is this true of the accompaniment. One could not imagine a better handling of this difficult orchestration. The horns, which with other conductors so often obtrude in a blaring, jarring manner, are here kept miraculously soft and easy. This can be noted especially in the orchestral passage before "Komm, O Hoffnung" and in the accompaniment at the end of the aria, two places where we often suffer from a cacophonous display of squawking

and braying. Toscanini gets as close to velvet as the music will allow.

When it comes to Miss Bampton's performance, I cannot be quite so ecstatic. Her ex-contralto voice does not show off to the best advantage in this music, studded as it is with top notes. She is never off pitch; but her high tones lack body and resonance. Unfortunately, Miss Bampton has a most difficult row to hoe, since the recording of *Abscheulicher* by Kirsten Flagstad (Victor 14972), from the standpoint of sheer vocalism, sets an almost unattainable standard. We can take as a touchstone that wonderful phrase ending with a B natural on the word "erreichen". Flagstad's assurance and glittering tones are truly breathtaking here: it is one of the great moments in recorded music. In comparison, Bampton's handling of the phrase is insecure and colorless.

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J. B. FAURE: *The Palms*; and SCHUBERT: *Ave Maria*; sung by Thomas L. Thomas, baritone, with Gustave Haenschen and his All-String Orchestra and Chorus. Victor disc 11-9109, price \$1.00.

▲ This seasonal disc has more in it to interest the devout than the primarily musical. The perennial *Les Rameaux* (*The Palms*) is taken at a brisk pace which admits the inclusion of all three stanzas, making generous use of a choral background. The English text is one of the familiar versions, though not, if memory serves, the most successful of them. The Schubert *Ave Maria*, in original intent and expression more appropriate to a woman's voice, is here given with the liturgical Latin text. This arrangement has obviously been made in order to make the song available for use in Catholic services, but unfortunately the words and music are a bad fit. Again the chorus is ever-present. Mr. Thomas is the possessor of one of the best baritone voices now before the public and he is a singer of taste. Perhaps a little too eager in *The Palms*, his performance of the *Ave Maria* has beautiful line and poise.

—P.L.M.



GLINKA: *Russlan and Ludmilla*—*There is a Desert Country* (Song of the Bard), *Persian Chorus*, and *Cavatina of Gorislava*; sung by artists and Chorus of the Bolshoi Theatre, with Orchestra of the same, conducted by S. Samosud. DISC set 751, two discs, price \$5.00.

▲ The popularity of Glinka's overture to *Russlan and Ludmilla* will give appeal to these recordings. Often called the "father" of Russian music, Glinka occupies a prominent place in Russian nationalism in music. He had a real gift for melodic spontaneity and should have been a greater composer

than he turned out to be. Unfortunately he was lacking in self-discipline. His two operas, *A Life for the Tsar* and *Russlan and Ludmilla*, have kept his name alive. The latter still occupies a conspicuous place in the repertory of the opera houses in Russia; whether the former retains favor with the Soviets, I cannot say.

Russlan and Ludmilla (composed in 1838-42) is based on Russian folklore and is what might be termed a fairy tale; the book is by the famous Russian poet, Pushkin. The *Song of the Bard* comes after the overture, and occupies a place in the opera similar to that of the *Song of the Astrologer* in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Golden Cockerel*. The *Persian Chorus* is heard in Act III; the scene is the cave of a sorceress who has trapped Ratmir, a rival of Russlan's for the hand of Ludmilla, and who has arranged a group of sirens to tempt him. The voice of the sorceress joins in toward the end of the chorus. Gorislava's *Cavatina* also comes from Act III. She is in love with Ratmir, who has deserted her, and in the aria she pleads with him to return to her.

Glinka's music to these various selections shows a gifted hand. The Bard's Song, strophic in form, may seem meaningless without knowledge of its words, but the chorus and the tellingly dramatic aria of Gorislava sustain interest. In these latter excerpts, one is reminded of the operatic technique of Moussorgsky and Tchaikovsky, both of whom, of course, came later. Undoubtedly, the influence of Glinka was far reaching.

The singers heard here are Kromshenko, a lyric tenor, as the Bard, and E. Slivinskaya, soprano, as Gorislava. The former has a voice of generally likable quality, but Slivinskaya's sizable soprano is shrill and not as steady as it should have been, particularly since her aria is a telling one.

I find the reproduction much better than in most Russian recordings. The surfaces on the set I heard were also better, but this, of course, may be due in part to the vinylite pressings of Disc.

—P.H.R.



MOZART: *The Magic Flute*: *Ah, I feel to grief and sadness* (*Ach, ich fuehls*); and *Don Giovanni*: *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*; sung by Eleanor Steber (soprano), with

Victor Orchestra, direction of Erich Leinsdorf. Victor disc 11-9114, price \$1.00.

▲ Several months ago Miss Steber gave us a sample of what she could do with Mozart: her version of the two arias of the Countess from *Nozze di Figaro* was one of the encouraging signs that there are still a few singers who can manage this sort of thing. She now turns to the roles of Pamina and Zerlina—no very easy transition—and proves herself once again in every way equal to the requirements. Some will regret her decision to sing the *Magic Flute* air in English, but this is in line with present policy at the Metropolitan where this very translation, by Ruth and Thomas Martin, is the order of the day. For purposes of comparison, this recording in English may be set against those of Dorothy Maynor and Tiana Lemnitz in German, and that of Lily Pons in French. For those who have the IRCC re-issue of the old Gadske version in Italian the game may be carried even further. The final line of the text, it has always seemed to me, provided Mozart with the occasion for some very beautiful musical extension which not only rounded out the form of his composition, but served as a kind of meditation, quite dramatic in its effect. The original has it *So wird Ruh' im Tode sein*. Pamina rings the changes on the two important words, *Ruh'* and *Tode*, bringing them into relief with the various accentuations in the repetitions. This doesn't quite happen in any other language, certainly not in the Martin version—*Peace I find in death alone*.

One of the pitfalls of this aria is the long high passage in which Mozart carries expressiveness so much further than the words can do. It is usually difficult to tell at this point just how the groups of notes are divided. Here Steber is certainly no more indefinite than most. To my mind this is a very subtle bit of writing, and I always wonder if the singer is not just a bit puzzled by it. One who seemed to understand it was Rethberg, and it is a great source of regret to me that the record she made of this air dates from the early days of electrical reproduction. As for the available versions, if one is to make a choice, it must lie between Maynor and Steber, or Lemnitz in the complete *Zauberfloete* set. Lemnitz misses perfection principally by some uncertainty in intona-

tion. Maynor seems not quite to have matured in the music, and Steber unfortunately sings in English.

This objection cannot be raised against *Batti, batti*. Here again the singing is clean, simple and appealing. I like it better than the rather unpoised version of Rethberg and the somewhat careful and mouthy singing of Audrey Mildmay in the complete *Don Giovanni* set. Elisabeth Schumann's record suffers from old recording, though she sings the aria superbly; Bori's was made at the close of her career, and has not all the grace it would have had ten years earlier—nor is it well recorded. But Bidu Sayao's recent version is definitely competitive. A choice of a modern *Batti, batti* will lie between Steber and Sayao. The present disc is excellently recorded. —P.L.M.

LILY PONS WALTZ ALBUM: *Kiss Me Again* (from *Mlle. Modiste*) (Herbert); *Tell Me That You Love Me Tonight* (Bixio); *I'll See You Again* (from *Bitter Sweet*) (Coward); *I'll Follow My Secret Heart* (from *Conversation Piece*); (Coward); *Fledermaus Fantasy* (J. Strauss—La Forge); *Romeo et Juliette—Je veux vivre dans ce rêve* (Gounod); *Mireille—O légère hirondelle* (Gounod); sung by Lily Pons, soprano, with orchestra conducted by Andre Kostelanetz and Maurice Abrahavanel. Columbia set M or MM-606, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The present tendency in planning song recital albums seems to be to group the pieces around some idea or musical form. The waltz is as good a connecting link as the next style or rhythm, and who is better equipped to provide a program of waltzes than Lily Pons? It is a long way from the love-ballads in three-quarter time of Bixio, Herbert and Coward to the operatic display pieces of

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Gounod and the brilliant fantasy which Frank La Forge has made for the soprano out of melodies from *Die Fledermaus*. But in them all the singer is the same Miss Pons—just a bit fluttery to be either really dazzling in the coloratura or perfectly lyrical in the more sustained songs, yet by no means lacking in purely tonal appeal. She is at her best in the Gounod arias. Be it said to her credit that she has not attempted to develop a new and special style for her singing of the popular selections.

One might question the inference in the notes by John Ball, Jr. printed in the album that Lily was the first personable *prima donna* in history, but this is not to deny the lady's charm, either as a personality or as a singer. The recording throughout the set is good.

—P.L.M.

COLE PORTER SHOW HITS: *Night and Day, I've Got You under my Skin, Begin the Beguine, Why Shouldn't I, What Is This Thing Called Love, Rosalie, Easy to Love, and In the Still of the Night*; sung by Allan Jones (tenor), with Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Ray Sinatra. Victor set M-1033, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ Cole Porter's show tunes, like Gershwin's, will live for a long time, and any singer with a good voice will be applauded by his admirers for including them in his repertoire. This album can't help but be attractive to Allan Jones' fans. Others may feel, as I do, that as well as Jones sings he misses some of the real flavor of this music. His style tends to be too smooth and reminiscent of the "conservatory" type of singing, which seems to me not in keeping with the essentially sophisticated nature of Cole Porter's music. There is none of Broadway in this album; perhaps it is a bit too wholesome for its own good. But all of this may be a recommendation to some people.

Allan Jones is to be admired for his clear projection of the words. I, for one, wish there was less vibrato in his tones, but withal his singing seems effortless. He is well supported by the orchestra under the expert direction of Ray Sinatra. The use of a chorus reminds us of the technique employed in some of the big "lush" shows on the radio. The quality of the recording is extremely brilliant but not always to the advantage of

the singer, since it tends at times to coarsen some of his loud tones.

—P.G.

PORTER: *Everytime We Say Goodbye and Only Another Boy and Girl*, from the Musical Review *Seven Lively Arts*; sung by Dorothy Kirsten (soprano), with Victor Orchestra, conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1156, price 75c.

▲ These two songs from the ill-fated review, *Seven Lively Arts*, do not reveal Cole Porter at his best. His talent for musical sophistication is unusual, but he seems less at home in the sentimental type of song. *Only Another Boy and Girl* is downright "corny" both in words and music, despite a momentary flash of inspiration in the middle section. The other song is a fairly good one, but hardly typical of Porter in top form.

Miss Kirsten sings so pleasantly, smoothly and easily that she makes me forget for the moment the criticism I made regarding Mr. Jones. As a matter of fact, I rather think these songs would fare better in a less cultivated vocal style, but nobody can deny that Miss Kirsten has made a pleasant record.

—P.G.

PUCCINI: *Tosca—Vissi d'arte*; and *Gianni Schicchi: O mio babbino caro*; sung by Licia Albanese (soprano), with Victor Orchestra, direction of Frieder Weissmann. Victor disc 11-9115, price \$1.00.

▲ On first consideration Licia Albanese would not seem to be the contemporary from whom we might expect the perfect *Vissi d'arte*. Perhaps my interest when I put the record on was in whether or not she would be able to bring it off at all with her light and lyric voice. Indeed, it may very well be that she could not make it effective in a large hall, and certainly she is not the singer to go through the role of Tosca. Nevertheless she has done a more than competent job here, probably as good a job in its own way as any recent singer has done with this aria. Two sterling qualities she possesses—a sense of musical line and an Italian temperament which she fortunately does not allow to get beyond control. The voice here sounds rounder than I remember it to have been at the opera (several seasons back) or on the air (more recently). Of course, riding over the

orchestra is no problem for any voice regardless of size or texture in this day of amplification, and here I can fortunately add that on this record the soprano does not sound distorted. She manages a fine climax and a striking *diminuendo*, an effect which made the old Eames, Destinn and Melba recordings memorable. I cannot claim familiarity with all the *Vissi d'arte*s ever made, but I think Albanese's can stand beside any of the more modern ones, and I suspect that so far as recording is concerned she has the best of it.

It is hard to understand why the *Gianni Schicchi* air—the one downright lyrical spot in that delightful opera—has waited so long for an electrical recording in America. So far as I can tell this is the first version of it since the acoustic disc of Alda—a fine enough thing in its day. Here Albanese is more naturally in her element, and she sings the lovely Puccini melody with charm and understanding.

—P.L.M.

SACRED SONGS: *Elijah—Hear Ye, Israel* (Mendelssohn); *The Messiah—How Beautiful Are the Feet* (Handel); *Alleluia* (Mozart); *St. Matthew Passion—Only Bleed and Break, Thou Loving Heart* (Bach); *Mass in B Minor—Laudamus Te* (Bach) (violin obbligato by Joseph Fuchs); *Now Let Every Tongue Adore Thee* (Nicolai—Bach—O'Connell); sung by Dorothy Maynor, soprano, with Victor Orchestra, direction of Sylvan Levin, and Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor set M or DM-1043, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Miss Maynor has chosen a good selection of standard oratorio and other religious airs, probably intended to make an especial appeal for Easter, though their significance is hardly seasonal. The important thing to the record collector is that she has seen fit to give us music which has not been overdone and which ranks among the very best of its kind. Not having heard the soprano for some years I was glad of the opportunity to observe by means of these recordings what progress she has made since the days of her sensationally promising debut. This comparison is facilitated by the inclusion here of one record side which was made with the Philadelphia Orchestra some years ago and

originally released in a coupling with an orchestral arrangement of another Bach chorale. However, it is difficult to say just how much of the contrast results from a change or development in Miss Maynor's singing and how much is to be ascribed to the recording. There is a greater spaciousness in the older record, apparently due to recording in a larger hall and to the singer being further from the microphone. There is also a greater fullness in the quality of the voice. In fact my impression listening to the new records is of a flutier tone quality reminiscent of so many English sopranos. This somehow seems right in the neglected *How Beautiful Are the Feet*, which, I have been told, is the standard audition solo for boy sopranos in England. This unemotional quality is certainly in place here. It appears less so in *Hear Ye, Israel*, which also seems to suffer from the singer's concern about getting it all on one side and from some not-too-clear reproduction.

The Mozart *Alleluia* is taken at a good jubilant pace, which is right enough except that it makes the passage work just that much more difficult to control. This is, of course, an old problem for the singer, almost never completely solved. If the *Alleluia* is taken more slowly, as it so often is, it will hardly have the spirit which it needs. Perhaps the extreme example of this sort of treatment on records is the version by Sigrid Onegin, who sang it not only too slowly but,

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for my taste, much too freely. On the other hand, a precedent for Miss Maynor's interpretation is the Schumann disc, where even that admirable soprano fails to achieve perfect clarity in here *coloratura*. However, Schumann does manage a greater rhythmic steadiness. (Parenthetically, I wonder how many readers of the accompanying notes will emerge with a clear idea of the musical form of a *motel*, or will learn just what is the bond between the *motets* of Palestrina and the *Exsultate* from which this *Alleluia* is taken.)

There is little to add in regard to the other two Bach arias. Both of them are welcome on their own merits apart from the great works from which they are taken. The *Laudamus* is generally sung by a mezzo or a contralto, but it sounds well in Miss Maynor's voice. One prevailing criticism of the singer's work is that her diction could be far better. I am not sure I know yet just what she is saying in the *St. Matthew Passion* air, though I do know it is not what it says on the label—it sounds like "Bleed and bust." Mr. Levin's accompanying orchestra is adequate.

—P.L.M.

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 217)

spring to wedge securely in the pickup head: aluminum is a preferred material for this yoke. A little filing may be required on the sides of the cartridge if it is a little too large for the head. The depth of the yoke should be such that the bottom face of the cartridge projects $1/16''$ to $1/8''$ below the bottom of the head when the assembly is seated securely. It is important that the cartridge be tight in the head or there will be disturbances in the record reproduction. The new location of the needle screw will interfere with the head so that the hole in the head must be lowered by filing away the rib between it and the bottom of the head. The needle pressure should be adjusted to between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ ounces by hanging an extra counterweight of some sort on the back end of the arm. A sensitive balance should be used in this operation to determine weight and location of the counterbalance to produce the above pressure. A slotted head screw to be operated with a small jeweller's screw-driver may be substituted for the heavier thumb screw."

Book Reviews

(Continued from page 223)

his enthusiasm for contemporary music. Finally, in the latter half of the 19th century there came a serious break between composer and critic in which for the first time the foremost critics sided with the public in their animadversion of new music and became, in effect, the mouthpiece of Philistinism.

Max Graf's account of these critical movements is always to the point, always charmingly written, always catholic in approach. The latter is most important, for in a book of this kind an unwarranted emphasis on one country or one period would serve as a grave distortion. The author has interlarded his account with hundreds of excerpts from the work of such varied critics as Rellstab, Heine, Debussy, Newman and Huneker: just enough to whet our appetite and send us searching for more. Mr. Graf ends with the hope that the critic of the future may once again diffuse knowledge and enlightenment, and heal the long-standing rift between the artist and society.

—Roland Gelatt

THE BACH READER, edited by Hans David and Arthur Mendel. W. W. Norton, \$6.00.

▲ The publishers of this volume have performed a signal service in making such a treasure trove of Bachiana available to the public. In this compilation of 18th-century documents dealing with Bach's life and music, the chief source material for Bach's biography is reprinted as well as contemporary criticisms of his music. The editors have also reprinted the first full work on Bach, that of J. N. Forkel, originally published in 1802.

There is nothing really new here, since the student could, with perseverance, find all this material in the great libraries of the world. But now it is collected in one attractive, well illustrated volume. A book, in short, that can be recommended unreservedly to all Bach lovers.

—Roland Gelatt

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